10: d'Orleans--271 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 502, 789

"The river narrows and forms a rapid, which is considered dangerous; and before he approaches it our steersman takes off his turban and rolls it round his breast, then he washes his face, kneels down like a Mussulman with clasped hands, then, raising himself, he strikes the pirogue several times with his hand; he is invoking the devil, who guards the rapids, and is begging him to grant us a safe passage. This prayer is a Laotian custom; for my own part the ceremonial inspires me with less confidence than our men's quick eyes and strong arms, which take us through the rapids without any check."

10: d'Orleans--271 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 361, 417, 789

"We stop for lunch at the village of Ban Sop Huan, on the right bank of the river; the houses form a street, like the one at Sop Nao; as usual two posts stand at the entrance of it; each has a piece of carved wood on the top, which, from a distance, resembles a duck or a chicken, some white scarves also are hanging from them; they are intended to drive away the evil spirits."

68: Mouhot--99 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 776, 823, 789

"I am at the gates of the infernal regions, for so the Laotians and Siamese designate this forest, [HD: i.e. Dong Phya Phia, the forest of the 'King of Fire', between Khao-Khoc and Korat in Siam] and I have no spell to terrify the demons which inhabit it, neither tiger's teeth nor stunted stag-horn; nothing but my faith in and love for God. If I must die here, where so many other wanderers have left their bones, I shall be ready when my hour comes."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

acknowledge in the street a lady with whom one happens to be on 584
particularly good terms. These things in Laos are fraught with an 576
etiquette which is the legacy of a highly organized society not too
far gone in decay.

The charm of Vientiane lies in the life and the customs of the 346
people. Unless one is an amateur of pagoda architecture there is 531
little else to be seen. The Laotians have preferred to work in wood,
rather than stone, and their art, confined chiefly to the decoration by
religious artists of the doors, pillars and interiors of pagodas,
quickly perishes in such a climate.

Outside the town there is a great, grey, half-decayed *stupa*, built 771
as a tomb for a hair of the Buddha. It is surrounded by a cloister, 755
containing perhaps a thousand Buddha images; a collection of 778
which the people of Vientiane are very proud. But even here,
where the religion is practised in its purest form, there is a little
degeneration, a little backsliding from the lofty philosophic concep-
tion; and the taint of magic practices shows itself. Selecting one of
the numerous images as a personal tutelary divinity, the devotee
subjects it to a kind of bribery similar to that sometimes practised
in Southern Europe with images of the saints. In this case the image's
chief function is healing, and when the sufferer recovers from any
complaint he hastens to the pagoda to apply gold-leaf to the part of
the Buddha corresponding to that where he has felt the pain in his
own body. I was interested to deduce from this practice that the
people of Vientiane are much plagued by headaches – perhaps [164]
those which accompany malaria.

Standing in a corner of the sanctuary was an ancient ithyphallic 778
statue, an old Hindu divinity, no doubt, which had been worn 789
smooth in the appropriate parts by the feminine adoration of a 892
thousand years. I was told that the women of the French colony
who wish for a child frequently emulate their husbands' pose of
Laos-ization by coming here secretly to pay their respects. I 000
wondered whether this clandestine tribute might not be extended

314 The wax is not of uniform quality in Laos, but varies in color and texture depending on the region, the type of bees [336] which produce it, and also on the flowers on which the latter feed.

In this land there are hive hunters who have a rare skill and an extraordinary flair. They are able to find wild hives in the confusion of the forest foliage, in hollow trunks and in rocky crags where no one else could. The methods used to capture the swarms of bees and their hives differ little from those in use in Europe, and include noise, music and smoke.

• [789] The Laotians claim that some bee hunters are able to get rid of the swarms of bees by attracting their queen by means of the sound of a kind of flageolet and by pronouncing certain cabalistic words.

435 The price of wax is quite high. A hundred kilograms cost 250 francs in Luang-Prabang, 219 francs in Nong-Khay, 290 francs in Cammon, 300 francs in Song-Khone and Saravane, 333 francs in Bassac, 208 francs in Attopeu, 312 francs in Stung-Treng, 500 francs in Korat, 250 francs in Pnom-Penh, and 300 francs in Cholen.

15. Rattan (Vai).

314 The rattan is a palm tree of the genus Calamus rudentum and
285 Calamus petracus. There are several types in Laos, which are used in accordance with their particular qualities.

The rattan industry is still in its early stages. A few Kha tribes of southern Laos traffic in rattan and supply the needs of local consumption, either in the form of crude rattan delivered in bundles, or in the form of mats and baskets, at a price of five francs per thousand or about sixty kilograms. It is present in great abundance throughout the whole land, and in northern Laos is even used for trade with Siam, which produces little rattan.

It is to be hoped that among the samples sent from Laos to France there will be some good ones which can be used abroad in the manufacture of all the wickerwork and esparto articles whose consumption is constantly increasing. This would provide an appreciable source of revenue for the land.

16. Bamboo.

313 There are some twenty varieties of bamboo. All [337] [Illustration] [338] [Blank page] [339] except one of these grow wild, the exception being the golden bamboo (Mai-So-Kham), which is chiefly cultivated in the enclosures of pagodas.

The following description of the many uses of bamboo is taken from the interesting work by Mme. Massieu:

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The different reasons for this feast must therefore be sought. First of all, it takes place at the end of [38] the dry season. It is the last rejoicing before the heavy work of the rice fields. Furthermore, its purpose is well determined, for it is intended to bring on the rains and to assure the fertility of the soil.

The principal element of this manifestation is the rocket. This is a long decorated bamboo which is supposed to represent the body of a Naga, one of its extremities being adorned with a Naga head. As for the multi-colored streamer hanging beneath, it symbolizes the rainbow. This theme, which is also found in Indochina, deserves to be studied in Laos before any comparison can be made. A passage of the history of Thao Kathanam gives us the reason for throwing up rockets in order to obtain rain:

"... the day Thao Kathanam was married to the daughter of the King of Champa there was a great feast. From the summit of Mount Gijjakuta, the Yaksa, Gandharva and Phi launched rockets to celebrate the event. For three days all the rockets rose to the sky where they reached the world of the Catulokapala (the four guardians of the world). The Then (genii) thought that the inhabitants of the earth were throwing fire in order to burn the muong Then. They were troubled by this and went to seek protection from the god Indra. Indra then instigated storms, rain and a devastating wind to destroy these balls of fire. The remains of the rockets fell to earth, caught on the trees and became parasitic plants. Since then, in order to obtain rain, rockets are launched towards the sky to frighten the Then."

But the throwing of rockets is also a competition, and the owner of the rocket which goes furthest is sure of a prosperous year. The Legend of Thao Phadeng and of Nang Ay of the country of the Nagas gives us the origin of this competition.

[39] "The son of the king of the Nagas was the rival of Thao Phadeng for the hand of Nang Ay. The father of Nang Ay did not know to whom to give his daughter, so he advised the two suitors to make some rockets. The one who would launch his rocket the furthest would become the husband of Nang Ay. Thao Phadeng won, but the son of the king of the Nagas would not accept his defeat and decided to obtain Nang Ay dead or alive." Then begins an amazing story in which there is no further question of rockets, and no element which might furnish an explanation.

In this way, the rain brought about by this hurling and competition of rockets will ensure a good harvest. Also to this first ceremony there is grafted a second which is the feast of fecundity.

796 It is not necessary to delay here over the licentious scenes, the songs
83 with words defying decency, the action of special marionettes, all
• 789 the allusions to the relationship between men and women intended to stimulate the fertility of the earth by sympathetic magic, all of which are well-known rites from classic antiquity up to ancient China. We will refer the reader to the authoritative study on the cycle of The Golden Bough by Sir James Frazer.

796 But what is the exact origin of this feast? Some claim that it is peculiar to Vientiane and has been celebrated in other towns of Laos only within the last twenty years. This comment is of capital interest. For, after the pillaging of Vientiane in 1827 by the Siamese General Phya Bodin, the majority of the population of Vientiane was deported to the right bank of the Mekong. Gradually the town was re-peopled by people coming from Tran-Ninh. Now it is a curious fact that on all the rocket shafts there is a strange decorative design whic is similar to those seen on bracelets and necklaces in the region of Xieng Khouang. Some [40] reliable authors having put out the hypothesis that the designs on these necklaces were the survival of an ancient solar cult, should one conclude that the rockets are the last misunderstood vestiges of an ancient fire worship, formerly practised by the populations of Tran Ninh? But then, at what time and under the influence of what rite, did this fire worship become transformed into a ceremony to obtain rain? The question remains open and perhaps future research and discoveries will give an explanation of this feast which is one of the most original and least known of Laos.

The Sacrifice of the Buffalo.

796 The sacrifice of the buffalo takes place at about the same time
782 as the feast of the rockets. This ceremony is known to all the Indonesian people of southeastern Asia, and its survival in Laos is of the greatest interest in the study of the antecedents of this country.

This ceremony is spread out through the months of May and June when the rainy season begins. It is found in western Laos where, according to a Pali chronicle, a Laotian king of Xieng Mai, who had no faith, adored demons and sacrificed buffaloes to the genii of the woods, the trees, the mountains, etc....

At Vientiane, near the Jules Bosc Avenue, can be seen a large stone which the Laotians worship as being a grain of rice. The buffalo is killed near this stone. A Nang Thyem woman, "inspired or possessed, after a series of invocations and ritual dances, pours water from a teapot onto the stone, while the by-standers flood the same stone with

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[touques].
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The experts throw themselves on the stone, turning it over to see if its underside has been wetted. According to the arrangement 787
of the dry spots, [41] deductions are drawn on the topography of the 243
rice fields which will be flooded, or remain dry, and on the advantage of making rice fields either "high or low."

This sacrifice of the buffalo is found in the myth of Gavampati, 789
the strange monk held aloof by the Buddhist community because he took the attitude of being an enemy of the waters. His death allowed the arrival of the rains.

Khao Vassa (Feast of the Eighth Month). 196

This is the date of the beginning of the Buddhist Lent. During the three months of rains, not being able to go from one place to 792
another preaching, the Buddha and his community retired into the park of the Jetavana. Besides the season of rains, as it awakens life 783
everywhere, causes animals to swarm in great numbers. It is therefore impossible at this time of year to travel without violating, at each step, the precept which forbids the destruction of all existence, however infinitely small it may be. Thus, during this period, the bonzes may not leave the pagoda and are obliged to be present at the general confession.

Oldenberg describes this confession according to the Pali texts as follows:

"No monk may miss it. Only he who is stricken with mental alienation may be dispensed.... By the light of a torch, the monks take their places at the place of assembly on low stools which have been prepared for them. Neither laymen nor student bonzes [bonzillons] nor nuns may be present, for the rule of the Order, to be recited in the form of a formula of confession, is considered in principle as a secret appurtenance of the monks only. This formula of confession, the Patimokkgam, is recited aloud by the oldest member [doyen].

.....

"Oh Reverend one, whoever has committed a sin, may he confess it.... After the third time that the question has been repeated, if a monk does not confess a sin which [42] he has committed and which he remembers, he is guilty of an intentional lie. Now an intentional lie, oh reverend one, is an obstacle to religious life. Such are the words of the Blessed One."

Then there follows a list of the sins which must be confessed. At the head of the list are the most serious ones: